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Farm Broadcasters Letter

Letter No. 2375

August 12, 1988

CROP PRODUCTION HIGHLIGHTS

The following are the highlights of the Crop Production Report, released August 11 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture:

All wheat production is forecast at 1.82 billion bushels, down 13 percent from 1987 to the lowest level since 1978. All wheat yield is expected to average 34.4 bushels per acre, 3.2 bushels less than in 1987.

Corn for grain production is forecast at 4.48 billion bushels, down 37 percent from last year's crop. The yield is forecast at 78.5 bushels per acre.

Soybean production is forecast at 1.47 billion bushels, 23 percent below last year. If realized, this will be the lowest production since 1976. The yield at 26 bushels per acre is the lowest since 1974.

All cotton production for the 1988 season is forecast at 14.9 million bales, an increase of 1 percent from the 1987 crop.

Peanut production is forecast at 4.34 billion pounds, up 20 percent from last year. Production is up in all areas except the Southwest.

WINTER WHEAT AND DURUM

The production of winter wheat is forecast by the U.S. Department of Agriculture at 1.55 billion bushels as of August 1. This is one percent less than both the 1987 production and the July 1 forecast. By the end of July, about 88 percent of the winter wheat nationwide had been harvested. Durum wheat production is forecast at 54.6 million bushels, down 41 percent from 1987 to the lowest level since 1970. The yield is expected to average only 18.5 bushels per acre, nearly 10 bushels per acre less than last season. If realized, this would be the lowest yield average since 1961.

CORN SUPPLIES ADEQUATE

Despite a massive reduction of 37 percent in the corn crop, the existing stocks ensure that supplies will be adequate to meet domestic and export needs. Based on projected use, the U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that stocks on hand at the end of the crop year, Sept. 1, 1989, will total 1.6 billion bushels. This level of stocks is equivalent to 22 percent of annual needs. In other words, it will be enough for nearly 3 months of projected use.

FARM ACREAGE
DOWN

The number of farms in the U.S. in 1988 is estimated at 2.16 million, down 1 percent from 1987, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. For the first time, land in farms had declined to less than a billion acres, falling to 999 million acres, a decrease of less than 1 percent from 1987. The average size of farms increased from 461 acres last year to 463 acres in 1988.

SOVIET GRAIN
CROP LOWERED

Prospects for the 1988 USSR grain crop have declined over the past month as both area and yield appear to be falling short of earlier expectations, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The 1988 grain crop estimate was lowered by 5 million tons to 210 million. The production estimates changed as follows: Wheat down by 2.0 million tons to 91 million...barley down by 2 million to 50½ million...oats down 1½ million to 17½ million...and corn up 500,000 to 16½ million. As of August 8, the Soviets reported 53.1 million hectares of grains and pulses, excluding corn, had been cut and 50 million threshed. Both the cut and threshed area were significantly above the recent average.

HAY
PRODUCTION

The hay production is forecast by the U.S. Department of Agriculture at 131 million tons, a decline of 12 percent from last year. The change is a result of sharply lower yields which more than offset an increase in hay acreage. With drought widespread in many major hay areas, growers utilized acreage released from various programs to offset low yields. The area for harvest, totaling 66.2 million acres, is up 9 percent from 1987 and will be the highest acreage cut for hay since 1965. The forecast average yield of 1.97 tons per acre compares with 2.46 tons per acre a year ago. If the forecast is realized, it will be the lowest average yield since 1966.

USSR GRAIN
IMPORTS -
1988/89

Reports of USSR grain purchases for delivery during the early months of the 1988/89 marketing year have been sparse. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soviet grain buyers may be delaying purchases as a result of prospects for a third consecutive good grain crop and in response to this summer's sharp run up in world grain prices. USSR's purchases of about 1 million tons of U.S. corn are believed to be the only significant purchase on the books. The U.S. was the major source of grain shipments to the USSR in 1987/88, accounting for 60 percent of USSR's wheat trade and 42 percent of the coarse grain trades.

GLOBAL WHEAT

The global 1988/89 wheat production is projected down 2 percent from last month, but about the same as 1987/88, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Unfavorable weather conditions have reduced production prospects in Canada, the USSR, Argentina, China and the European Community. Foreign consumption is expected to be maintained by drawing down stocks or increasing imports. Global ending stocks are projected down 7 percent from last month and 19 percent below 1987/88. While the lowest since 1981/82, they are the equivalent of around 23 percent of projected annual world use.

REASSURING
STATEMENT

At the crop report conference, Ewen Wilson, Ass't Sec'y for Economics, U.S. Department of Agriculture, made the following summation: "Today's reports confirm that the drought has had a major impact on this year's crops. But because of large pre-season stocks, total supplies are enough in most cases to assure an adequate food supply at home, satisfy foreign customers, and meet our food aid commitments. We continue to believe that the drought will add only one percentage point to the Consumer Price Index for food in 1988."

FROM OUR RADIO
SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1628... (Weekly 13½ min documentary) What's the best way to beat the heat? Sprinkling ourselves with water from a hose or swimming in the pool--both good options, but with water conservation on the minds of many people because of low rainfall in many areas of the country, we may need to consider different ways to keep cool. On this edition of AGRICULTURE USA, George Holmes talks to Univ. of Maryland ext. agent Margaret Ordóñez about keeping cool as we conserve our water supply.

AGRITAPE/FARM PROGRAM REPORT #1616... (Weekly reel of news features) USDA news highlights; Drought and shipping potatoes; Drought vs. FCIC; Problems accompany U.S. farm recovery; 1988 U.S. crop predictions.

CONSUMER TIME #1108... (Weekly reel of 2½-3 min features) Growing seaweed for profit; Saving water; Vitamin C...the cure?; Are pre-cooked turkeys safe?; A breath test for vitamins.

USDA RADIO NEWS SERVICE... Mon, Aug. 15, Cattle on feed; Tues, Aug. 16, Crop and weather, Livestock/poultry outlook, Milk production; Wed, Aug. 17, Feed outlook; Fri, Aug. 19, Ag. outlook, Catfish, Livestock slaughter. Dial the USDA National News Line 202-488-8358 or 8359. All material changed at 5 p.m. ET each working day.

FROM THE NEWS SERVICE: In addition to our normal news lines, we are offering a daily crop weather update which is changed Monday through Friday at 9 A.M. Eastern Time. The number for this report is 202-447-2545.

TELEVISION SERVICE programs, A BETTER WAY, DOWN TO EARTH, AGRICULTURAL UPDATE and SATELLITE NEWS are available on satellite Westar IV, audio 6.2 or 6.8 as follows:

Thursdays....AG UPDATE/SATELLITE NEWS, 7:30-7:45 p.m. ET.....Transponder 12D

Saturdays....A BETTER WAY, 10:00-10:30 a.m. ET.....Transponder 10D

ORIGINAL DOWN TO EARTH, 10:30-11:00 a.m. ET.....Transponder 10D

UPLINK SATELLITE NEWS/AG UPDATE, 11:00-11:15 a.m. ET.....Transponder 10D

Mondays.....A BETTER WAY, 8:00-8:30 a.m. ET.....Transponder 12D

REPEAT DOWN TO EARTH, 8:30-9:00 a.m. ET.....Transponder 12D

UPLINK SATELLITE NEWS/AG UPDATE, 9:00-9:15 a.m. ET.....Transponder 12D

A BETTER WAY is also available on The Learning Channel SATCOM 3R, Transponder 2, Audio 6.8 each Thursday at 10:30 a.m. ET.

OFF MIKE

According to a newspaper in Oregon and a radio station in Wash., D.C., Mitzi Ayala, KXTV, Sacramento, has recently married Frank Perdue, of poultry fame...Kathleen Lonergan, KMA, Shenandoah, IA, has a new pet pig, named "Flash". She got him when he was one day old, is feeding him by bottle, and he runs around with her dog. A D.C. area NAFB member, who rightly asked not to be identified, commented, "When they put the ham in the skillet, it'll be a Flash in the pan."...Layne Beaty, retired USDA Chief, R&TV, has just taped Bryson Rash, retired NBC News, for the Archives of the Broadcasting Pioneers Library. Rash is full of stories, including one about the first live TV event of a president in the White House. It was Harry Truman. A few seconds before the camera rolled, somebody noticed Truman's bow tie was crooked. Rash bent over the desk to straighten it, just as the camera rolled--with a CU of Mr.

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Rash's seat...The USDA gets thousands of letters from the public asking for information. A recent letter read, "I have a chicken named Crystal Beak that lays green eggs. Why?" In case you don't know, USDA chicken experts say Crystal Beak is apparently a breed of chicken called Aracuna that lays pale green eggs...Send us your news, gossip or yarns. We're always looking for high tone material that's fit to print.

Margaret T. Desatnik

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